



Positive Behavioral Interventions

"The comprehensive planning process has given stakeholders an important role in informing OSEP on how IDEA Part D national activities can help improve results for children with disabilities."

Lou Danielson, Ph.D.
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Research to Practice

Experts Inform Part D National Program Plan

In 1999, the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) launched a long-range, comprehensive planning process for Part D of the reauthorized 1997 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)*. OSEP's goal for its Part D national program is to link best practices to states, school systems, and families to improve results for infants, toddlers, and children with disabilities. Part D of IDEA '97 authorizes national program activities and federal funding (see figure, this page).

OSEP undertook a significant initiative in implementing the Part D national program comprehensive planning process. Among

the activities undertaken were:

- Solicit opinions about the Part D national program through mass distribution of an opinion survey.
- Convene experts to identify issues in key program areas and make recommendations for how the Part D national program may address them.
- Use recommendations from the opinion survey, panels, and other national and state sources to develop a five-year Part D national program plan.

This brief focuses on the opinions of national authorities regarding positive behavioral interventions and social/emotional and life skills supports and services for students with disabilities.

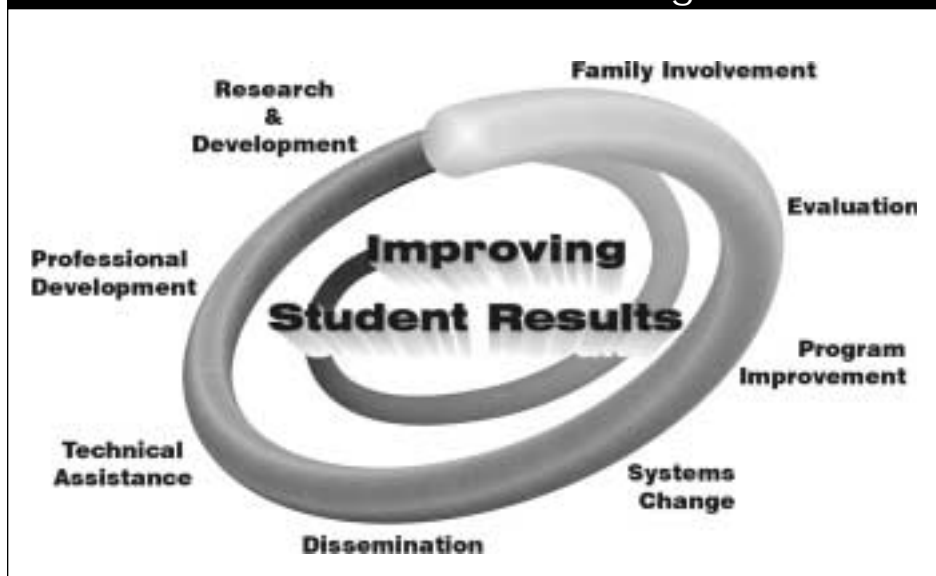
Findings

IDEA provides that children with challenging behaviors receive instruction and services, including preventive measures, to help them achieve a quality education. The authorities identified four issues that, when addressed, promise to help alleviate the negative consequences of students' challenging behaviors. They also suggested how Part D national program activities in part might address these issues through research and knowledge building, public awareness and support, and capacity building.

Issue 1: Children need early access to comprehensive support.

Early access to comprehensive, intensive, individualized prevention and behavior supports is key to improving results for children

IDEA Part D National Program



with challenging behaviors. Yet traditionally, the mode for addressing the challenging behaviors of children is reactive—that is, punishing or removing a child after a problem or crisis has occurred. Moreover, school interventions for problem behavior typically are based on unproven strategies and are implemented by staff who lack training needed to deal appropriately with the child and situation. Although some services exist, coordination usually is lacking among schools and other agencies. Too often, primary responsibility for behavior is placed on families, with little support.

To this end, the authorities suggested that Part D national programs might support research and knowledge production related to ensuring valid, reliable, and culturally competent identification practices, as well as timely and efficient interventions, for children needing behavior support.

Issue 2: Children with or at risk for delinquent or antisocial behavior need specialized services.

A comprehensive, interagency system of services that meets the social, emotional, and behavioral needs of children and youth is necessary to prevent delinquent and antisocial behavior and to improve programs for adjudicated and incarcerated youth. Some pockets of effective practice exist currently, but coordinated efforts are lacking.

The authorities suggested that Part D national program activities might support research and knowledge development that addresses the lack of educational opportunities—particularly, lack of early identification, preschool programs for at-risk children, effective instruction in basic skills, and use of proven best practices—from birth through adulthood for children out

of the typical environment (including incarceration).

Issue 3: There is a shortage of trained staff to provide school-wide support.

Systems of multi-dimensional prevention that encompass the individual, family, school, and community require human and fiscal resources. Schools must have a sufficient supply of skilled and knowledgeable personnel who are positively disposed toward children and youth with challenging behaviors—and these staff must have the resources they need to fully and effectively implement IDEA provisions. Presently, schools are faced with an insufficient supply of personnel and a widespread concern about the skills of those who are now being asked to teach children with complex, challenging behaviors and emotional disabilities.

To this end, the authorities suggested that Part D national program activities might focus on addressing the needs of children with complex, challenging behaviors and emotional disabilities by supporting research and knowledge production that suggests approaches for increasing:

- The supply of skilled, knowledgeable, and positively disposed personnel who are being asked to implement prevention and instructional programs.
- Effective linkages between schools, community systems of care, and families that provide coordinated, comprehensive, individualized, family-centered interagency services.

Issue 4: Many children with challenging behaviors are unserved or underserved.

A number of children with emotional/social needs—such as those with autism, developmental disabilities, and those who are homeless, migrant, and/or in foster care

and psychiatric facilities—are not being served or are underserved. Comprehensive and coordinated interagency service systems are needed to address the complex behavior and life skills needs of these disenfranchised children.

To this end, the authorities suggested that Part D national program activities might support research and knowledge production that address the needs of unserved and underserved children, including effective comprehensive, interagency wraparound services.

Next Steps

OSEP staff members are currently discussing the implications of expert opinions. Their results, along with those of the consumer survey and other relevant planning information—such as the findings of Parts B and C monitoring and oversight efforts and State Improvement Grant Program proposals, as required under Part D, Subpart 2 of IDEA—are being integrated by agency-wide staff workgroups into a comprehensive Part D national program plan. The public will be invited to comment on the Part D national program plan before it is presented to Congress for approval. ■

**The comprehensive planning process is authorized by IDEA [sec.661(1)].*

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